(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU); (a) No, Sir.

(b). Does not arise.

(c) In view of constraint of resources and large throwforward of on-going projects, it is not feasible to consider construction of the proposed new line.

Petition against Banerjee Committee Report

588. SHRI JANARDHANA POOJARY: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that following the findings of the U.C. Banerjee Committee that the Godhra train fire was caused by accident, certain intellectuals and journalists have petitioned Government to free the persons incarcerated on the suspicion of causing the fire and paying compensation to such persons; and

(b) if so, the details in this regard and Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. Ministry of Home Affairs has referred the petition to the Government of Gujarat for comments.

Railways' safety measures

589. SHRIMATI JAMANA DEVI BARUPAL: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether he has prepared a comprehensive plan with a policy thrust on safety measures;

(b) whether Railways have decided to install new devices for interlocking system at 1550 stations nationwide;

(c) if so, whether new system could affect better operational efficiency, flexibility and greater safety by providing quick route setting on the pressing of entry and exit key on a central control panel;

(d) if so, whether installing of new devices will check human error in rail accident; and

(e) if so, other details of plan prepared by his Ministry?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) The Corporate Safety Plan of Indian Railways for the period 2003—2013 has been formulated and presented to both the Houses of Parliament in August 2003.

(b) Yes, Sir. Replacement of overaged signalling systems at 1494 stations was envisaged in the Corporate Safety Plan issued in August, 2003. Out of these, work has been completed at 567 stations and the work at the remaining 927 stations is in progress. During this period replacement of signalling systems by modern interlocking systems is in progress at 1550 stations on Indian Railways.

(c) and (d) Yes, Sir. Provision of panel interlocking coupled with installation of a number of other devices helps check possibility of error on the part of operating staff and leads to better safety.

(e) the Corporate Safety Plan states the objectives, targets and strategies for which the Indian Railways would be striving in the next decade.

It envisages an action plan involving total investment of Rs. 31,335 crore for safety related works during the ten year period.

Some of the salient features of this Plan are:-

(i) Aim to reduce overall consequential train accidents per million train kilometres from 0.44 in 2002-03 to 0.17 in 2012-13.

(ii) Targetting elimination of collisions by extensive use of Anti-Collision Device (ACD) and other measures.

(iii) 60% reduction in derailments.

(iv) Reduction, in fire accidents and consequent fatalities by 80% by adoption of fireproof coaches and use of fire retardant materials in the existing coaches.

(v) Containng the rising trend in level crossing accidents.

(vi) Aiming at reduction in fatalities in case of serious accidents by use of Crash Worthy Coaches and tight lock couplers with anti-climbing features.

(vii) Reduction in accidents attributable to human failure by 40%.

Repair of dilapidated rail bridges

† 590. SHRI DHARAM PAL SABHARWAL:

PROF. R.B.S. VARMA:

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government have earmarked funds for the repair of rail bridges to be undertaken in future of which are in dilapidated condition;

(b) if so, whether bridges in dilapidated condition have been identified;

(c) if so, the details of the amount earmarked for the repair of bridges; and

(d) by when the repair work of the bridges would be completed alongwith the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) to (d) Repair and Rehabilitation of bridges is an on going process on Indian Railways. Railway undertakes repair, rehabilitation/ rebuilding of bridges on the basis of their physical condition as ascertained during annual inspections and not on the basis of age. Few bridges which may show signs of deterioration of physical condition indicating need for rehabilitation are classified as Distressed Bridges. These, however, are neither unsafe nor dilapidated bridges. Sometimes the bridges are strengthened due to the requirement of heavier axle loads and higher tractive effort. Based on such identification of bridges, allotment of funds is made annually to carry out their repair, rehabilitation/rebuilding duly prioritizing the works as per requirement.

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.